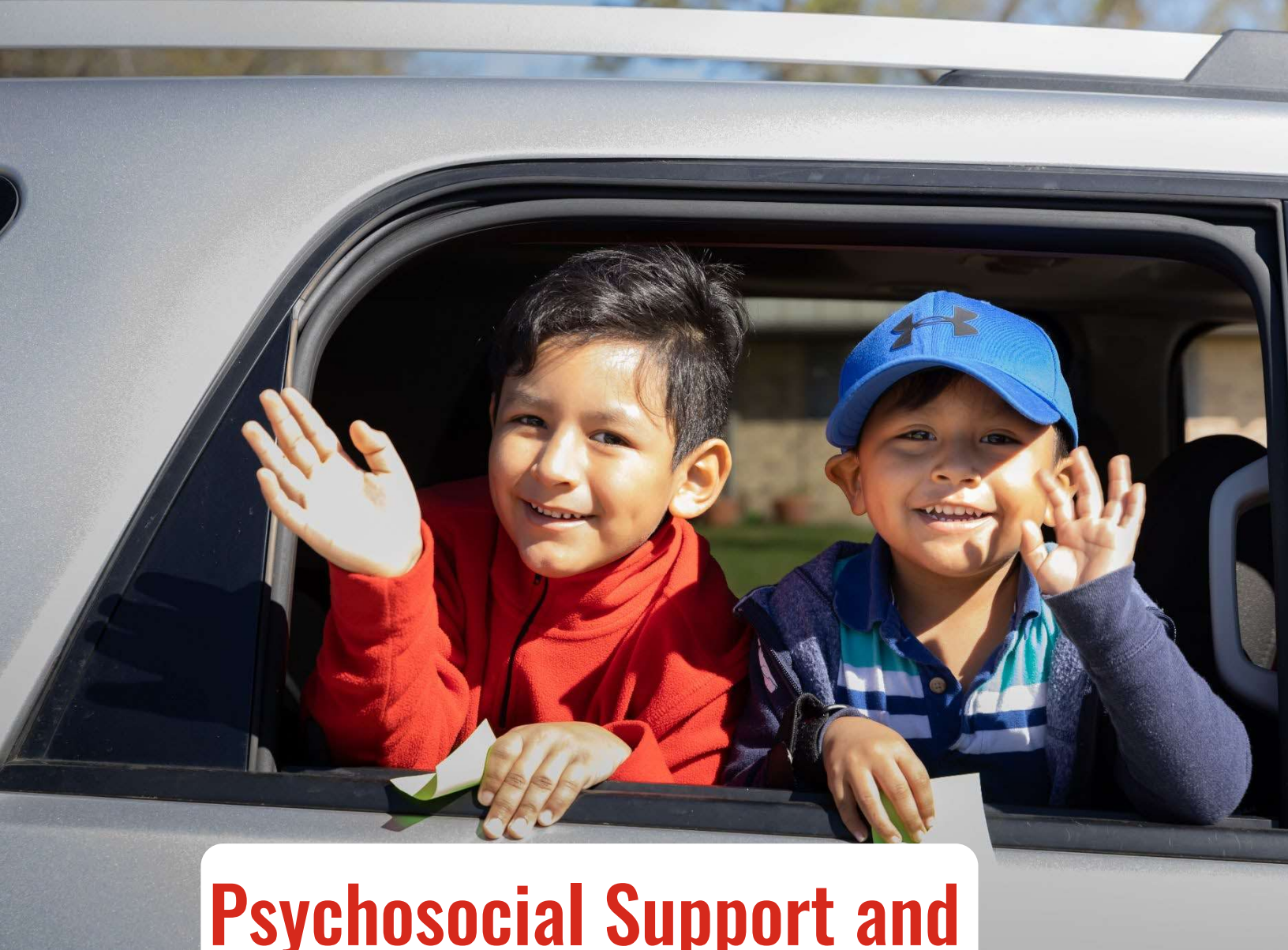




# Psychosocial Support and Education in Emergencies



**Save the Children®**

## Programs Overview

2024

Two children wave as their family receives hygiene items and other essential supplies at a Save the Children distribution event following the Texas winter storms in 2021. *Photo: Chris Olfers/Save the Children*

Save the Children believes every child deserves a future. In the United States and around the world, we do whatever it takes – every day and in times of crisis – so children can fulfill their rights to a healthy start in life, the opportunity to learn and protection from harm. With over 100 years of expertise, we are the world's first and leading independent children's organization – transforming lives and the future we share.

## Psychosocial Support Programs and Training for Children and Caregivers

In the U.S., Save the Children partners with community organizations to identify needs, provide training and build staff capacity to provide psychosocial support to children and caregivers in areas impacted by disaster. Our goal is to increase child and caregiver access to quality social, emotional, and mental health supports that can help them cope with daily and acute stressors.

### Journey of Hope

Disasters can be psychologically overwhelming to children. The Journey of Hope program is used to support children and communities in the recovery process. Through cooperative play, literacy, discussion and art, children are provided with a small group setting to explore and normalize their emotions. This evidence-based program helps minimize feelings of fear, anger and sadness and reduces the risk of post-traumatic stress disorder. As trained facilitators lead the 8-session program, children are allowed the space and encouragement to develop healthy coping mechanisms and identify internal and external social support systems.

### Caregivers' Journey of Hope

Children's wellbeing depends in large part on the stability and wellbeing of their caregivers, as they understand, and process events based on the messages they receive from adults in their lives. Adult caregivers can participate in our Caregivers' Journey of Hope. The three-hour workshop allows time and space to process experiences, identify coping mechanisms and develop community resources to increase caregivers' capacity to support children. By attending to their own emotional needs, caregivers can be more fully present and attentive to the needs of children.

### Bridges

Bridges provides early support interventions to children who have experienced a natural disaster or significant stressor. Activities promote resilience, while reducing the impacts of stress on social, emotional and behavioral functioning. Bridges is intended for the early stages of disaster response and recovery when communities are restoring a sense of normalcy. It is designed to help support and develop a child's ability to identify and understand feelings, access coping skills to manage emotions, ask for help and build resilience.

### Psychological First Aid for Children and Caregivers (PFACC)

Psychological First Aid for Children and Caregivers (PFACC) training helps caregivers and first responders support children, adolescents, adults and families experiencing distress. PFA is an approach used to help reduce stress and improve functioning and coping. Training equips participants to identify age-specific stress reactions in children and adults, provide basic emotional support, identify needs, and make connections to additional resources and support systems as needed.

### **Strong from the Start**

Strong from the Start teaches early childhood educators about the unique considerations of infants/toddlers and their families who are affected by stress and trauma. This training helps providers understand how disasters and toxic stress may affect children ages 0-3 and what they can do to help buffer them from the stress of a current crisis or lingering uncertainty after a traumatic event. The training increases providers' understanding of brain development and trauma, and imparts skills to support children's emotional safety, healthy development, and resilience. Strong from the Start also addresses the need for those working with young children to prioritize self-care and reflective practices.

### **Helping Caregivers Cope with Crises**

This training focuses on understanding the basics of stress management in an emergency recovery environment. It was designed to provide the time and space needed for reflection, processing, sharing, community building, amplifying strengths, and discovering solutions. Caregivers have the opportunity to: 1) discuss their well-being; 2) explore the types and sources of stress they were experiencing; 3) identify coping mechanisms; and 4) set goals for future self-care.

### **Helping Children Cope with Crises**

This training helps participants understand and identify how trauma can impact children, explores typical reactions to crises and best practices to facilitate the short- and long-term emotional recovery for children. This session also includes guidance on preparing spaces for children (childcare facilities, schools) in ways that consider their unique needs.

## **Education in Emergencies Programs and Training**

Save the Children has developed training and workshops to prepare early childcare education businesses, directors, teachers, and organizations to become more resilient and to support educational growth before, during, and post disaster.

### **Childcare Funding Guide for FEMA Assistance**

This guide provides a simple road map to assist childcare business owners in applying for disaster assistance from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) or the Small Business Administration (SBA) after a disaster is declared. The FEMA guide training is designed for CCR&R's, childcare business owners and directors. This is a 1-hour workshop that can be delivered in-person or online.

### **Childcare Emergency Preparedness Training (CCEPT)**

Childcare programs are often left out of emergency planning at the federal, state and local levels. Save the Children supports childcare recovery post disaster. CCEPT is designed to help childcare providers develop and implement an emergency plan in their childcare program in addition to identifying risks and preparing year-round for emergencies. Childcare providers will be able to create a written plan that addresses their emergency needs and continue to communicate, practice, and update their emergency plan on a regular basis. This is a 2.5-hour workshop that can be delivered in-person or online.

### **Circle Time Training**

Circle time is a wonderful way to connect with your class and reflect as a group, with opportunities to share short and meaningful learning experiences. It promotes many key areas of development for children, including social-emotional, physical, cognitive, and language development. This is a 45-minute workshop that can be delivered in-person or online.

## Childcare Recovery Toolkit

This training provides detailed information on tools created by Save the Children to help child-serving organizations prepare for and respond to disasters, while constructing a recovery program to support childcare recovery in the wake disaster. Save the Children's Toolkit for Childcare Recovery provides organizations, such as childcare resource and referral agencies, a solid foundation to lead effective recovery programs that empower affected childcare providers, sustain access to learning opportunities and build the resilience of young children, families, childcare providers and communities. The Toolkit includes tools that are scalable and may be modified to accommodate planning needs within your organization. This is a 1.5-hour online course.

## Return to Learning (RtL) Curriculum

This is a response education program designed to be used in the first phase of an emergency (or for out of school care in a protracted crisis), to ensure children quickly regain access to quality education and restore a sense of normalcy to improve their wellbeing.

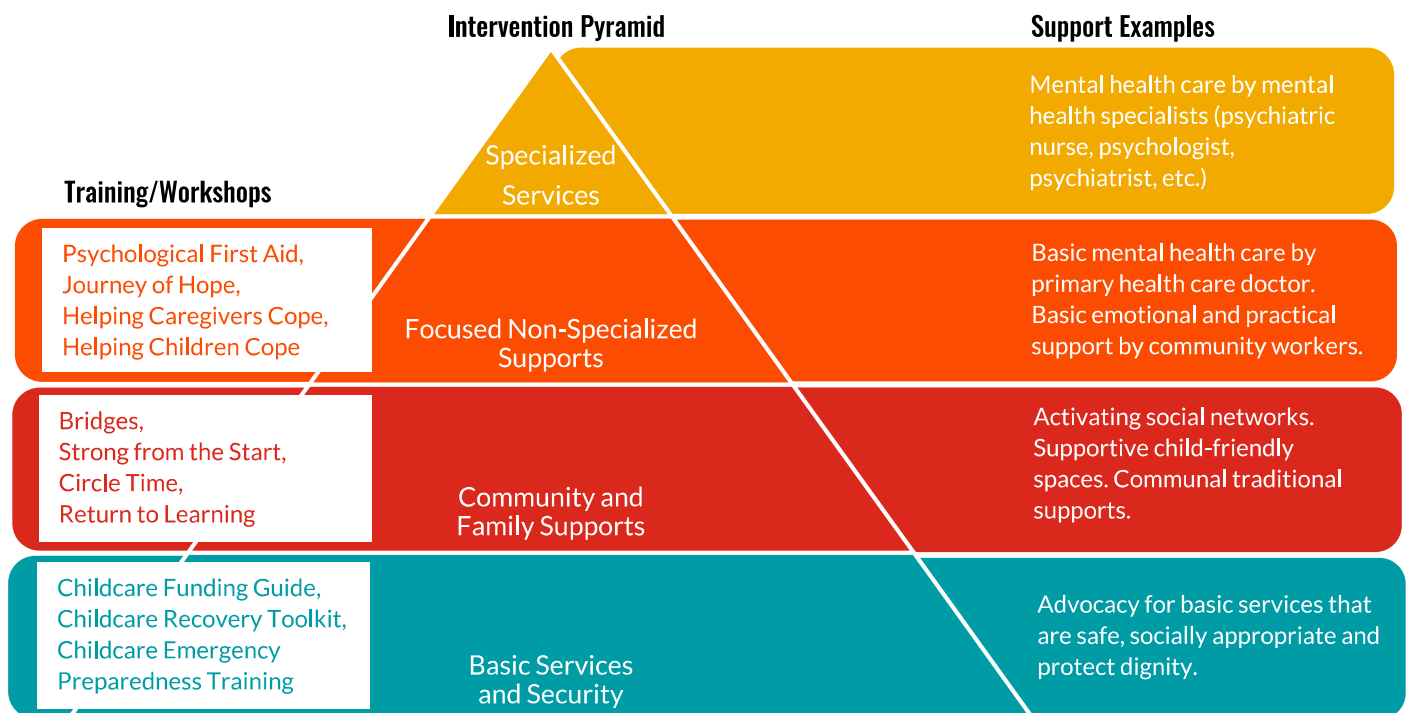
The program includes:

- Activity plans with game-based activities for children and adolescents ages 4-15
- Provision of teaching and learning materials
- Facilitator training modules

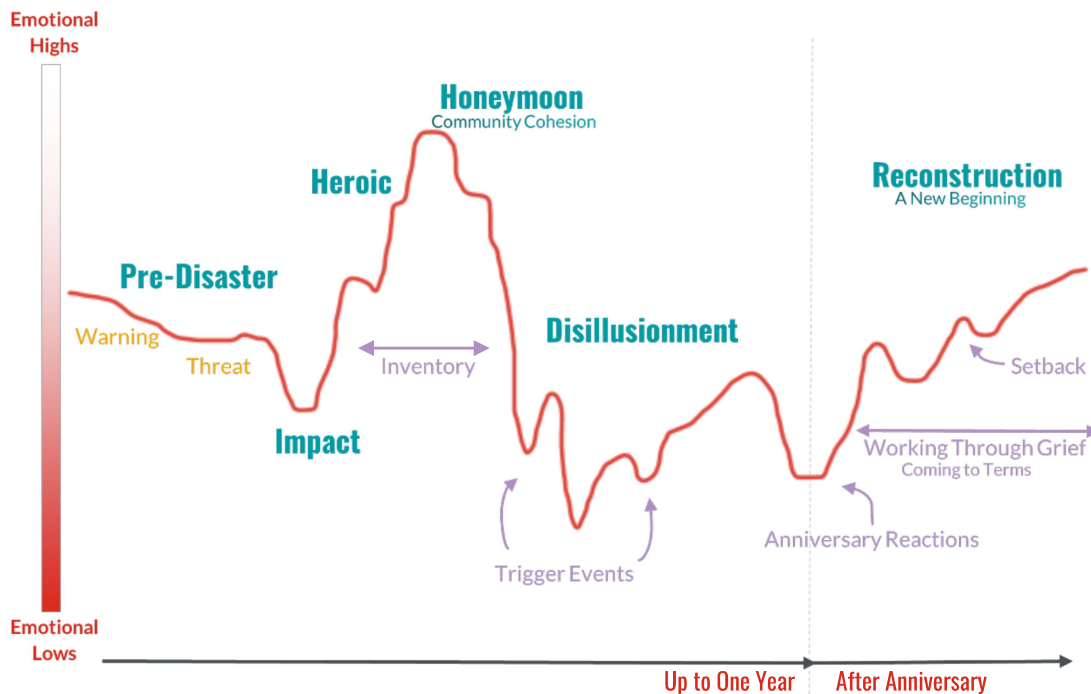
Return to Learning focuses on strengthening capacity to work quickly in a space and time when children are most at risk—and before they are either integrated into the formal education system, or gain access to a non-formal education program, engaging children in literacy, numeracy and social emotional learning.

## IASC Guidelines for Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Emergency Settings:

Intervention pyramid for mental health and psychosocial support (IASC Reference Group MHPSS, 2010).



## Collective Reactions: Typical Phases of Disaster



### Pre-Disaster phase

- Disasters with no warning can cause feelings of vulnerability, lack of security, and loss of control; fear of future unpredicted tragedies; and inability to protect oneself and one's family.
- Disasters with warning can cause guilt or self-blame for failure to heed warnings.

### Impact phase

- Reactions can range from shock to overt panic.
- Initial confusion and disbelief are followed by a focus on self-preservation and family protection.

### Heroic phase

- Many survivors exhibit adrenaline-induced rescue behavior, as well as high activity with low productivity.
- Risk assessment may be impaired.
- There is a sense of altruism.

### Honeymoon phase

- Disaster assistance is readily available.
- Community bonding occurs.
- Many are optimistic that everything will quickly return to normal.
- Community support staff and volunteers can establish a program identity, gain access to survivors, and build relationships with stakeholders.

### Disillusionment phase

- Stress and fatigue take a toll.
- Optimism turns into discouragement.
- The need for substance use services may increase.
- The larger community returns to business as usual.
- Demand for psychosocial support services may increase as individuals and communities become ready to accept support.

### Reconstruction phase

- Individuals and communities begin to assume responsibility for rebuilding their lives.
- People begin adjusting to new circumstances.
- There is a recognition of growth and opportunity.

Source: Zunin/Meyers, as cited in U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2000). *Training manual for mental health and human service workers in major disasters* (DHHS Publication 90-538). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, SAMHSA, CMHS.